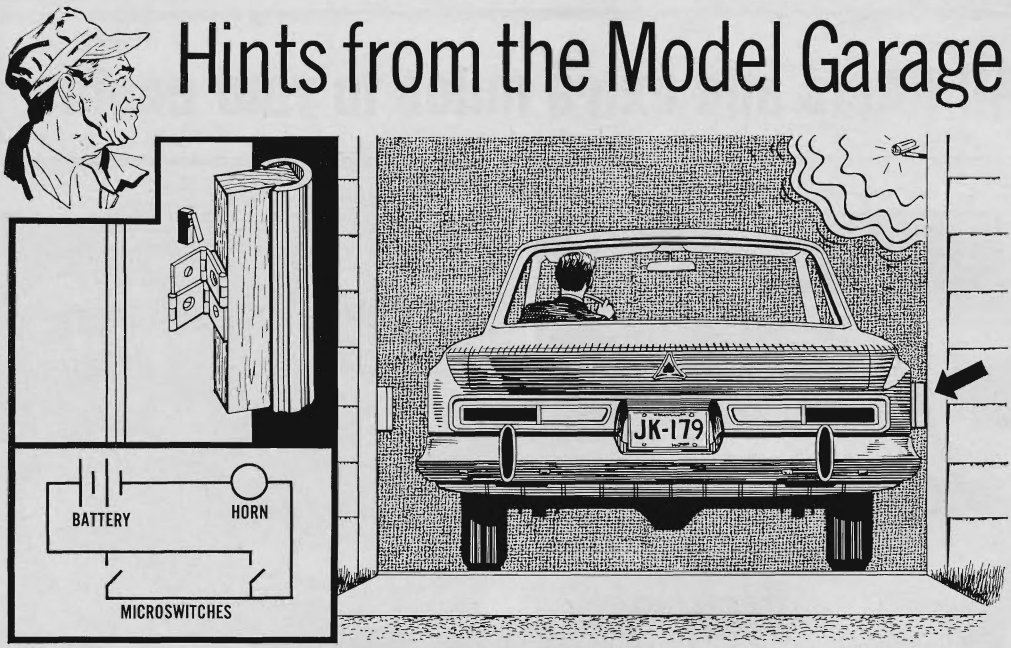
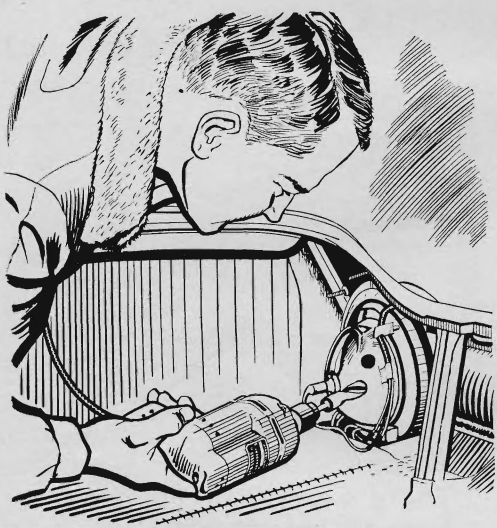
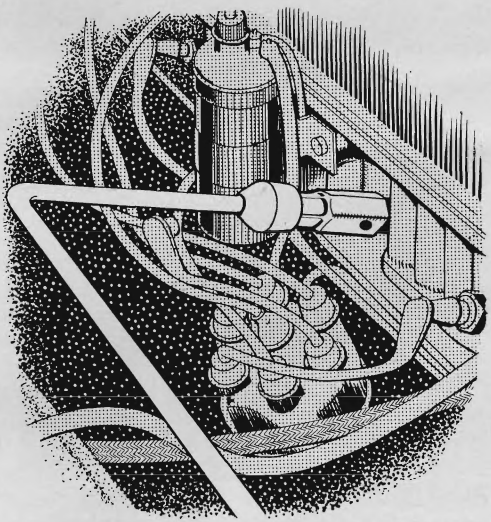
Hints from the Model Garage



Microswitches can prevent damage to your car when you pull in and out through a tight garage opening. On each side of the opening, at the same level as the widest part of your car, mount a switch behind a wood block secured by a double-acting spring hinge. Cover the edge of each block with a strip of garden hose, and wire the switches to a flashlight battery and a bicycle horn. If your car touches one of the wood blocks as you drive past, a blast from the horn warns that you're too close.



Need a handy trunk light for emergencies after dark? Simple: Drill two ¾″ holes in each tail-light housing where it protrudes into the trunk. Then, when you turn on your parking lights, more than enough light will spill over into the trunk.



Spark plugs screwed in too tightly are a problem to remove. One reader, having bent his plug wrench in trying to force removal of a hard-to-get-out plug, found that his wheel-lug wrench socket fit the plug-wrench hex. The plug came out easily.

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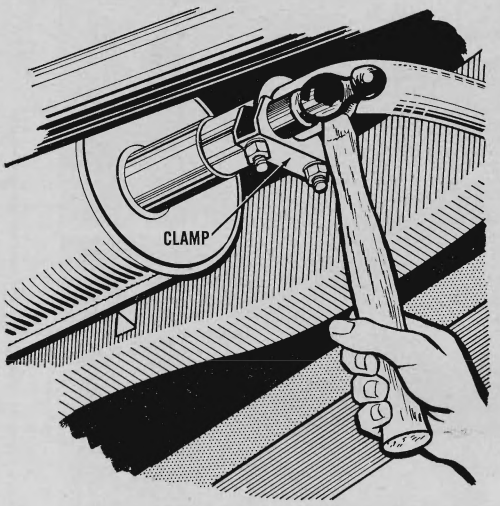
More Hints from the Model Garage



Use a muffler clamp to force a tailpipe into the muffler outlet. Invariably the pipe has to be hammered to get it to seat properly. By fastening a clamp near the end of the pipe that goes into the muffler, you have something to hammer against.

When threads are stripped in the crankcase drain-plug hole after long use and no bolt will tighten properly, get out your welding torch and a nut. Braze the nut securely over the hole, and then plug it with a matching bolt and a washer.

Which Gauge Should You Choose?

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- While big locomotives are fine in the right setting, they're not at their best cavorting around a small layout. If your space is limited, consider the possibilities of old-time equipment or a narrow-gauge road, a dockside switchyard, or an interurban line.
- Remember that too large a layout spells trouble. If you ever get it finished, maintenance becomes an unending chore.
- Avoid the temptation to string too much rail in a given area. Sure, a four-track mainline is impressive. But a ribbon of single-track meandering across a Lilliputian countryside looks much longer.
- All your high-iron shouldn't be visible. If it is, long trains will obviously chase their tails. Really fine layouts incorporate a hidden loop, either tucked under the scenery or tunneled furtively into the laundry room. After a station or siding stop, you can shunt your crack express or redball freight onto this oval and keep it out of sight as long as you wish. The experts go further. They frown upon mainlines that are no more than continuous loops, however artfully disguised. They insist that a model pike should go from here to there—like the real thing.

This is easily done in club layouts built by many hands in an area as large as Grand Central Station. But the lone-wolf modeler has neither the energy nor space for two complete terminals. There's a way out. You can have "point-to-point" operation with a single, blind-end passenger depot, engine-servicing plant, and switchyard. Simply tie them onto your mainline loop and dispatch trains in and out.

A terminal station, with its high platforms packed with tiny figures is a surefire eye-catcher. So is a roundhouse served by a turntable that swings dutifully in line with any stall at the touch of a button.

While you're at it, don't forget sound and lighting effects. There are wonderful disc and tape recordings of terminal noises. Lighting can be just as exciting. A modeler in Phoenix, Ariz., uses a time clock to actuate rheostats that change day into night and vice versa every 20 minutes.

All of this may seem like riding an iron hobby horse too hard. But you probably won't think so, once your miniature trains are rolling over rails spiked to the right track gauge. ■■